

January 29, 2003

DEAN YOUNG: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is a pleasure to welcome you to this forum regarding Afghanistan, on behalf of The George Washington University Law School. I have two hats in this event today, both as a member of the Commission, as well as Dean of the George Washington University Law School.

With respect to the Commission, this is an opportunity for us to both hear firsthand about the state of affairs in Afghanistan, as well as to think together with you, in a collaborative way, about what steps may be taken to help that country, as well as what kinds of advice, assistance, the United States, in particular, can provide.

We have the opportunity of not only having a large number of very senior Afghans from their government, but we will be joined by senior officials from the United States government as well, and it will give us a chance to talk together about ways in which we can advance these concerns that all of us on the Commission feel so essential and critical to true nation building.

For George Washington University Law School, this is also a bit of a return to our roots. This is not well known around the country, but in the 1960s and '70s, George Washington University Law School actually sponsored a program for lawyers from Afghanistan, where they would come and train in issues relating to constitutional development, administrative law, corporate and commercial law, and a whole range of subjects. And over the course of a number of years, during which we ran that program, we had literally dozens of attorneys from Afghanistan, and we are delighted and honored to say, at least some of them have been able to return to Afghanistan and work on the constitutional development in that country. And so, for us, we feel it's a great privilege to come full circle, as it were, to be able to renew our engagement with this great country, to renew our engagement with the people of Afghanistan, and to do this in a way that allows us to talk about a principle we consider most important, the rule of law, as well as meld that with the work of the Commission relating to human rights.

So it's a great privilege to be able to co-sponsor this conference, and on behalf of George Washington University Law School, we warmly welcome you.

I also want to extend thanks to the staff of The George Washington University Law School, particularly Associate Dean Susan Karamanian, who has been so effective in helping set up all of the logistics and physical facilities for this.

Now, it's my great privilege to introduce an ex-officio member of our Commission, Ambassador John Hanford, who serves currently as the Ambassador for Religious Affairs in the U.S. Department of State, has done so during the administration of the current President Bush, but long before that, also an extremely active participant in these affairs, as he worked for many years on Capitol Hill, with the same passion and commitment to these issues that he now demonstrates in his current position.

Ambassador Hanford?